

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Velázquez Unveils Legislation to Aid HSIs

Congresswoman Velázquez unveiled legislation, the Hispanic Servings Institutions Improvement Act, to provide a steady source of funding to colleges and universities that serve a large number of Hispanic, low-income, first-generation college students, also known as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

“With graduation season upon us, we are reminded of the difference a college degree can make,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “As our nation faces the tightest job market in 20 years, it is critical that minorities have access to higher education – a necessity to compete in today’s workforce.”

Even though Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S., they have the lowest levels of education attainment. HSIs attempt to bridge this gap by providing special services, such as counseling and tutoring, to help at-risk students stay in school and complete their education.

HSIs are able to effectively serve Hispanic students through Title V grants provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Title V grants range from \$400,000 to \$600,000 annually, and for many HSIs, which operate on very small budgets, this funding can be the difference between staying open and closing down. Currently, the Title V law prevents a steady flow of funds to HSIs because these grants are awarded for a five-year period followed by a two-year waiting period. The act would eliminate the two-year waiting period for these grants.

“Because funding has increased and the majority of eligible institutions are being served, this wait-out period is unnecessary,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “By making this small change, we would make a big difference in helping HSIs achieve their mission – to provide more Hispanics with the opportunity to earn college degrees.”

Between 1999 and 2002, \$4.6 million in funding was provided to HSIs in New York City.

Fear of SARS Hits Chinatown

Velázquez encourages visitors to the area

Together with local groups, Congresswoman Velázquez showed her support for Chinatown and the need for tourists and visitors to come back into the popular neighborhood. Velázquez announced her request for federal assistance to ease the impact of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Chinatown. Velázquez asked for additional funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and greater economic assistance from the Small Business Administration (SBA).

“SARS has posed a serious public health problem for local residents and has caused a financial drain on businesses in Chinatown that have seen their patronage dwindle,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Not only does this community need additional health care provider briefings and public education campaigns on SARS, but businesses there also need financial assistance to help them weather the current economic crisis. Tourism in Chinatown has plunged, creating substantial cash flow problems in the community. I hope that my request for federal assistance will be met, which will help ease the negative consequences the fear of SARS has had on the stability and viability of this popular New York City neighborhood.”

Even though there has yet to be a reported case of SARS infection in Chinatown, the perceived threat has also caused economic hardship among area businesses. As tourists, the local Asian community and other New York City residents avoid Chinatown, the economic impact has been felt by many local businesses.



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks at a press conference in Chinatown.

SBA’s disaster loan program helped businesses in New York City stay afloat following the terrorist attacks. Congresswoman Velázquez is requesting such loans be made available to struggling Chinatown business owners at this time.

“As the Ranking Democratic Member of the House Small Business Committee, I know the difference SBA disaster loans can make in keeping the doors to small businesses open in our local communities,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “For the last two years, Chinatown has struggled to rebuild. Now they are faced with yet another crisis facing their livelihood – and it is SBA’s disaster loan program that can help them.”

Velázquez Supports Park Row Lawsuit

Congresswoman Velázquez announced her support for a joint lawsuit filed by two residential complexes seeking to reopen Park Row to vehicular and pedestrian traffic between Worth Street and City Hall.

“Reopening Park Row is essential to the economic revitalization of Chinatown and to the quality of life for those who live here,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Residents have suffered from a decision that was made without taking their best interests into consideration. I support the lawsuit, which is now a last attempt at getting the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the City to address these concerns.”

The NYPD closed Park Row between Worth

Street and City Hall to cars on September 11, 2001, and to MTA buses in May 2002, and it has remained closed ever since. The NYPD recently proposed the installation of barriers at both ends of the closed section, which alarmed local residents who believed the move signaled the department’s intention to make the closure permanent.

“The Park Row closure has cut off Chinatown from the financial district and civic center, which severely threatens the economic viability of this area,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “It is unfortunate the situation now warrants legal action, but I am behind whatever needs to be done to get the voice of the community heard in decisions concerning Park Row.”

Housing Grants Workshop Held

Representatives from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) joined Congresswoman Velázquez at her housing grants workshop to discuss funding opportunities that are available to the public.

“At a time when federal funding for many programs is diminishing, it is important to educate these organizations on ways to access money,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “There are major funding opportunities available and a grants workshop such as this one is a chance for the public to learn how take advantage of them.”

HUD works to provide opportunities for homeownership, housing assistance for low-income persons and aid to local communities to meet their development needs.

Velázquez has been assisting local organizations throughout her district to access federal dollars through these grant workshops.



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks to attendees at free housing grants workshop.

Velázquez Requests Study on Disaster Loans

Congresswoman Velázquez has requested the U.S. General Accounting Office perform a study on whether or not all small businesses that could have benefitted from an SBA Disaster Assistance Program loan following the September 11 attacks, received one.

“The Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Disaster Assistance Program served a vital role in responding to the victims of September 11, but many of these loans were not successful,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “We are hoping to find a way to effectively broaden the reach of SBA’s Disaster Assistance Program to respond to future terrorist attacks and natural disasters. By requesting that GAO conduct this study, we hope to successfully secure future loans to small businesses that have been faced

with challenges resulting from disaster.”

Congresswoman Velázquez intends to use the results of the GAO study as the basis for a legislative proposal aimed at expanding and improving the Disaster Assistance Program. Through this proposal, the program’s scope would be widened, barriers would be removed that would prevent potential borrowers from receiving program assistance, and would enable the federal government to be more capable of responding during future disasters.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Congresswoman Velázquez introduced H.R. 3011, the Small Business Emergency Relief Act (SBERA). SBERA would provide low interest and no-cost loans, payment grace periods, forgiveness of existing SBA loans, and grants, but it was blocked by the Republican leadership.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Universal Service Administrative Company

Notre Dame High School	\$9,000
St. Brigid School	\$31,601.54
Holy Child Middle School	\$17,294.79

Department of Health and Human Services

New York University	\$556,010
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National Endowment for the Arts

Working Theatre Company, Inc.	\$10,000
Sound Portraits Production	\$20,000
Asian American Arts Centre, Inc.	\$15,000
H.T. Dance Company, Inc.	\$30,000
Cineaste Publishers, Inc.	\$15,000

HHS Region II Office for Children and Families

Educational Alliance	\$1,384,013
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Department of Education

New York State Dept.	\$915,679
New York Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped	\$1,734,627
New York Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	\$1,907,518
New York Office of Children and Family Services	\$537,752
New York State Education Department	\$51,090
New York State Commission on Quality of Care for Mentally Disabled	\$933,103